

MEMO

DATE: July 12, 2007

TO: Energy and Environment Committee

FROM: Jessica Kirchner, (213) 236-1983, kirchner@scag.ca.gov

SUBJECT: Regional Comprehensive Plan Goals and Outcomes for Open Space

BACKGROUND:

On June 11, 2007, the Regional Comprehensive (RCP) Task Force and Benchmarks Task Force recommended the EEC review the proposed goals, outcomes and actions for the open space chapter of the RCP. Staff has undertaken a robust planning process for the open space chapter of the RCP including process design, policy compilation and review, and development of goals, outcomes and action plans. Staff has crafted specific sustainability goals and quantified performance outcomes as a central feature in each chapter. The outcomes represent the region's desired future position among a range of factors. Staff, with consultant assistance, has also crafted preliminary strategies and actions to assure that the outcomes are achieved.

Staff has sought input from the RCP Task Force, the Open Space Working Group, the Benchmarks Task Force, cities, counties, sub-regions, and various other stakeholders and experts on whether these outcomes are appropriate, achievable, and a good representation of the policy priorities of the region.

Attachment: Outcomes for the open space chapter of the RCP.

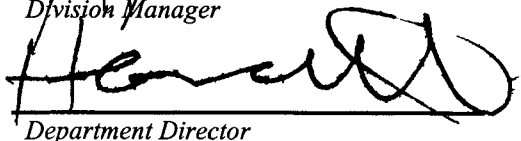
FISCAL IMPACT:

Activities related to the Regional Comprehensive Plan are contained in the OWP under the work element 07-035.SCGS1.

Reviewed by:


Division Manager

Reviewed by:


Department Director

Reviewed by:


Chief Financial Officer

Attachment
RCP Open Space Chapter
Draft Goals, Outcomes and Action Plan
June 11, 2007

Natural Lands

Goals

Ensure a sustainable ecology by protecting and enhancing the region's open space infrastructure and mitigate growth and transportation related impacts to natural lands by:

- Conserving natural lands that are necessary to preserve the ecological function and value of the region's ecosystems;
- Conserving wildlife linkages as critical components of the region's open space infrastructure;
- Coordinating transportation and open space to reduce transportation impacts to natural lands.

Outcomes

1. By 2035, increase the amount of protected open space in the region by at least 700,000 acres of natural lands that include important wildlife linkages, have special status habitats or species and/or buffer protected natural lands from development. The number of acres protected would be roughly proportionate to the urban footprint of the 2004 RTP.
2. By 2012, have in place approved conservation strategies for all regionally significant wildlife linkages.

Action Plan (Partial)

Constrained Policies

- SCAG shall set up a clearinghouse of important GIS data used for open space planning. SCAG shall maintain and update the regional open space database, track open space conservation and development in the region provide annual updates on conservation efforts as part of the State of the Region.
- SCAG shall work with local governments and conservation organizations to promote coordinated mitigation programs for regional projects and establish the basis for inter regional conservation strategies.
- SCAG will work with CTCs to ensure that at least one acre of unprotected open space is permanently conserved for each acre of open space developed as a result of growth that accompanies transportation projects/improvements.

Strategic Initiatives

- The State should establish an institutional framework that would allow SCAG to oversee the natural lands conservation program.
- SCAG should have an open space funding program in place and have established a separate non profit entity to oversee funding for conservation compacts or conservation opportunities pursued by SCAG.

Community Open Space

Goals

Enhance the region's parks, trails and community open space infrastructure to support the aesthetic, recreational, and quality-of-life needs, providing the highest level of service to our growing region by:

- Creating new community open space that is interconnected, accessible, equitably distributed and provides public health benefits.
- Improving existing community open space through urban forestry and other programs that provide environmental benefits.

Outcomes

1. By 2035, all SCAG subregions have community open space systems that have an "above average" level of service (LOS).
2. An "above average" LOS for community open space, by 2012, in areas that participated in SCAG's 2% Strategy demonstration projects.
3. From 2007 conditions, increase the percentage of transit trips that can access community open space in one hour or less by 2012.

Action Plan (Partial)

Constrained Policies

- SCAG shall establish a LOS methodology for community open space and set a standard for acceptable LOS.
- SCAG shall require all Compass 2% strategy demonstration projects initiated after approval of the 2007 RCP to include a strategy for providing and conserving open space in or near demonstration projects.
- SCAG shall encourage local jurisdiction to prepare a Needs Assessment to determine the adequate community open space levels for their areas.

Strategic Initiatives

- Revise the *CEQA Guidelines* to ensure that the LOS paradigm is a recognized tool for planning and evaluating community open space.
- Local governments should revise their General Plans to ensure that the LOS paradigm is a recognized tool for planning and evaluating community open space.

Agricultural Lands

Goals

Preserve the productivity and viability of the region's agricultural lands while supporting a sustainable economy and region by:

- Maintaining a viable level of agriculture to support economic and food supply needs for the region while supporting sustainable energy, air quality, and transportation policies;

- Promote and support a strong locally-grown food system by encouraging community farming and developing cooperative farming initiatives that use sustainable farming practices.

Outcomes

1. At least 6,500 acres enrolled in a new regional farmland conservation program and no net loss of farmlands enrolled the regional program through 2035.
2. Develop an outcome that focuses on locally grown food consumed in the region.
3. Develop an outcome that focuses on the number of farmers using sustainable farming practices.

Action Plan (Partial)

Constrained Policies

- SCAG shall work with the agriculture community and other interested parties to establish a regional Farmland Conservation Strategy.
- SCAG will use its IGR process to flag projects with potentially significant impacts to important farmlands and recommend impact avoidance and mitigation measures.
- SCAG shall develop a measure to evaluate food miles.¹

Strategic Initiatives

- The State should pass legislation to reform the Williamson Act or replace it with new initiatives and incentives to prevent the continued urbanization of existing farmlands.

¹ food mile is the distance food travels from where it is grown or raised to where it is ultimately purchased by the consumer or other end-user